

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
EXTENSION SERVICE
Washington 25, D. C.May 21, 1947 ~~at WALTER~~
For your informationTO STATE FARM LABOR SUPERVISORS OF Fla., Ga., S.C., N.C., Va., Md., Del., Pa.,
N. J., N.Y., Conn., Tenn., and Ohio

Subject: Atlantic Coast Migratory Movement.

MIGRANTS READY BUT NO CALLS FOR THEM

Last week's letter indicated that migrants are ready to leave Florida with no strong demand for them anywhere. As of this date, there has been no material change in this situation.

SOUTH CAROLINA harvests are getting under way. Work will be heavy next week. There is room today (May 20) in the Edisto camp for 125 and in the Johns Island camp for 25. Two other camps will be open next week. Crews expecting to live in the Government camps should communicate with the following county agents before leaving home.

C. W. Caraway
County Agent
430 County Center
Charleston, S. C.
Telephone: 7173

N. R. Davis, Jr.
County Agent
Ridgeland, S. C.
Telephone: 69

E. C. Abrams
County Agent
Beaufort, S. C.
Telephone: 53

NORTH CAROLINA's representatives have just returned from Florida where they checked employment agreements with about 90 percent of the crews who have work in that State for the coming season, and urged them to remain in Florida until they receive letters from employers or county agents telling them that the crops have matured and that the camps are opening. The experimental effort put forth this year in this State to key the time and amount of migration to the need for workers and the amount of housing available has worked well to this point. Up to now, no underemployed or unemployed migrants are in any of the areas. This in itself is an accomplishment since it has been past practice for many workers to race to the producing areas in order to get the jump on their fellows in competition for limited housing and employment. Efforts to eliminate this competition and keep workers at their homes have been successful to date. Last year, without this effort, 1,220 workers had passed information stations on the way to North Carolina areas by May 15. This year, by the same date, only 22 had passed. That this decrease is not the result of a general decrease in movement is indicated by the fact that there has been no corresponding decrease for Virginia.

VIRGINIA is experiencing unusually dry weather which is having adverse effect on the strawberry crop thus greatly reducing the number of pickers needed. Crews going to the Virginia strawberry areas should check with their employers or the following county agents before leaving home.

H. M. Clark
County Agent
Accomac, Va.
Telephone: 81-J

R. U. Nottingham
County Agent
Eastville, Va.
Telephone: 31

MARYLAND is still standing by its earlier stated need for 450 migrants at about this time. Bill Hillman says he has housing and employment ready for these workers. Mr. Sheffield, now in the Belle Glade office, says that most of the crews needed have now been referred to Mr. Hillman. This is early employment and crews wishing to be considered for it should contact Mr. Charles A. Sheffield, Farm Labor Office, Belle Glade, Fla. The telephone number is 285.

NEW JERSEY has no immediate need for additional workers. However, crews looking for work later in this State would do well to communicate with the following:

Milton Stotter	Clinton Mundy
Farm Labor Assistant	40 South St.
Bridgeton, N. J.	Freehold, N. J.
Telephone: 846	Telephone: 80663

NEW YORK has very little work yet of the type migrants prefer. Workers going to that State should communicate with their employer or the appropriate county agent before leaving home.

CAN CREW LEADERS BE BY-PASSED?

I have before me three telegrams that occasion the above query. They recently passed between a New Jersey employer and a Florida county agent. The employer wired the county agent as follows:

"Urgently need 15 workers for farm labor, prefer married couples if available. State expense on transportation. Wire information to me collect within 24 hours, if possible."

This telegram asks one question. The Florida county agent, however, knows that two questions must be answered before placement can result. In his reply, he answers the first question and asks the second. Note the question in his reply below:

"Crew leader with 15 adult workers willing to report not later than May 12. Requires \$150 for expense. Crew leader has truck. What is proposition for crew leader?"

Here the county agent disposes of the first matter involved, transportation, and proceeds to the second, recruitment.

The employer apparently either assumes that recruitment is no problem or that the Florida Extension Service will do it for him. He wires:

"Could use 15 men but do not require leader. We have farm manager. I will send bus tickets to get them here if weekly redemption from men is sanctioned. Wire collect immediately. Need help urgent."

My knowledge of the interchange of telegrams ends on this proposal to advance transportation cost and eliminate the crew leader. Will the employer get the workers? I think it unlikely.

This interchange of telegrams throws the spotlight on a widespread misconception on the part of employers of how the Atlantic Coast Migration functions, and of the relations of the Extension Service to it. This employer assumes that transportation is the only difficulty he will encounter in bringing the 15 workers to his farm. This is a complete misconception of the relative magnitude of the difficulties involved in his proposal. Transportation is a real problem, but it is not the only or even the most difficult one. He can solve the transportation problem himself by a mere willingness to spend money. His real difficulty lies in locating 15 individuals over a thousand miles from his farm, whose names he does not even know, presenting to them his employment proposal in terms they understand, waiting for them to think over the proposal for a day or so, discuss it at home, and finally accept or reject it, set a date and place for departure that suits each individual's needs or whim, and finally provide transportation facilities at the designated time and place. These are his real difficulties and they cannot be solved by a mere expenditure of money.

At this point, misconception of the relation of the Extension Service to his problem becomes involved, if indeed, he is actually aware of what he is asking of the Florida Extension Service. Certainly, if he has ever recruited labor himself, he must know that recruitment is a very intricate process of adjusting personal necessities and desires to a common end, and is an operation that takes a great deal of time and an infinite amount of patience. Surely, it is not quite realistic for him to expect the Florida Extension Service to search out individual workers and sell his proposal to them. Were the whole Florida Extension staff to drop everything else and turn to an effort at presenting to individual workers the requests for migrants it will receive during the next six weeks, it could not even begin to serve everyone.

It is to be noted that the Florida county agent quoted above did not indicate that he was negotiating with, or was even in touch with, individual workers. Even the employers, in and out of Florida, who use these migrants most heavily, rarely negotiate with individual workers. The sheer magnitude of the task of recruiting large numbers of individuals at great distances for short periods of time has caused employers to turn this intricate and to them baffling operation over to a special class among the migrants. These are the crew leaders. The Extension Service found this crew leader system highly developed when it was given responsibility for aiding employers and migrants during the war. It now continues to avail itself of the system because no substitute for it is in sight.

I think it highly unlikely that it is feasible for the Florida county agent in question to by-pass the crew leader with whom he had discussed this particular New Jersey employment and make the offer to each individual worker. This would take more time than he has to use in this way, even if he knew where to find the various individuals. Should he do so, it is probable that the workers would refer him to the leader. This would certainly happen if this particular leader maintains good relations with the members of his crew.

It is a misconception of the Atlantic Coast Migratory movement to assume that it is a ready source of workers available to growers upon request. It is a source of much excellent labor but it is not nearly so easily accessible as those unacquainted with it imagine it to be. Actually, much continuous intelligent effort and considerable expenditure of money is required of those who would rely upon it. It is also a misconception to assume that because the Extension Service helps farmers secure migrants, it is equipped with personnel and procedures that enable it to substitute its procedures for the crew leader recruitment system that developed of itself out of the needs of migrants and their employers.

Very truly yours,



C. W. E. Pittman
Southeastern Area Director
Recruitment and Placement Division
Extension Farm Labor Program

